

I am committed to making sure that seniors have the drugs they need to stay healthy without having to make painful choices between buying groceries or paying rent or getting prescriptions filled or even paying their utility bills.

As the Medicare issue continues to be debated in Congress, I have always supported what is best that I felt for working people of America. I understand that Medicare provides for so many who have provided so much to our Nation and continue to do so, and I believe sincerely that Medicare should have a provision to work with the pharmaceutical companies, to get discounts just as the discounts are received prior to the senior citizens turning 65.

In a study conducted nationwide, Advance PCS found that the average person over 65 fills about 20 prescriptions per year compared to about three per year for a person in their 20s. This study shows that average cost per prescription for a person in his or her late 60s is about 45 percent higher than the average cost per prescription for a person in their 20s. Brandeis University reported that the percentage of elderly spending more than \$3,000 annually on medication more than doubled from 1997 to 1999, from 3.7 percent to 8.6 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the over-65 population will increase by an average of 304,400 people each year between 2000 and 2005. According to Families USA, the average cost per prescription for seniors has already risen during that time in the past 8 years by 48 percent.

It is for these reasons that we must address the high cost of prescription drugs for our seniors. Unfortunately, legislation recently passed in this House does not entitle seniors to any particular drug benefit plan. Instead, the Republican-backed Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003 provides only a standard benefit and is merely a suggestion for what private plans might offer. This plan provides no assistance for prescription drug cost between \$2,000 and \$5,600 per year, and nearly half of all of our seniors have prescription drug expenses over \$2,000 annually.

Democrats know that the American seniors have waited long enough for relief from the Nation's skyrocketing prescription drug prices. Unfortunately, we are not giving our seniors an affordable and dependable plan with no gaps in coverage. Instead, the Republican leadership has chosen to hijack the democratic process yet again by blocking our party's attempts to provide a commonsense prescription drug benefit through the Medicare program. By shutting down opposition, rather than allowing an open debate, the Republican leadership is making it clear that they are afraid to compare their sham prescription benefit plan to the Democratic substitute. When the plans are put side by side, the American public sees that the Republican

plan fails to provide any substantive benefits. The public will see that their plan's benefits are so insignificant that it would not be worthwhile for many middle-class seniors to enroll. The Republican plan does nothing to curtail the exploding drug prices because of their ties to the pharmaceutical industry, and that is a matter of record that can be checked.

Providing affordable prescription drug coverage should be an issue that transcends partisanship. The American public should be outraged that the Republican leadership is playing politics with the health and well-being of millions of our seniors, and I hope the voters will remember their shameful abuse of power when they go to the polls next November.

#### CLEAR ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share the tragic tale of a New York mother's brutal attack, why it should never have happened and what can be done now to ensure that it never happens again.

Mr. Speaker, just this past December, a man and woman were sitting in a New York City park when they were suddenly surrounded by a gang of young men. The gang kicked and beat the woman before dragging her along the nearby railroad tracks, forcing her into woods where they threatened to kill this 42-year-old mother of two and repeatedly raped her. Mr. Speaker, it was a vicious, shocking, horrific crime. But, Mr. Speaker, it was a crime that should never have happened.

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That should have never been allowed to happen in the first place. The reason it should have been prevented is that the five males charged with carrying out this heinous act were living in the United States illegally. Even more unbelievable, four of them had criminal pasts and had been in the hands of law enforcement authorities, two actually having served jail time. But instead of being immediately deported, as the law says, they were released back on to the streets, back into our society, allowing them then to commit more crimes.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is just one story of many stories, stories of crimes that should have been prevented, of victims that should have never been. These stories are a reflection of our immigration law enforcement system in our Nation that is badly broken and in need of immediate repair. It is a system that provides little or no coordination between Federal, State and local officials, is badly outmanned, and results in safe havens for common criminals who roam the countryside instead of safe streets for the law-abiding citizens who call this home, and needlessly and increasingly endangers the very

homeland security of the United States at a very critical time in our Nation's history.

Mr. Speaker, today in America there are almost 400,000 individuals who have been ordered deported, but are instead hiding out in our communities. Of these, roughly 80,000 are criminal aliens, and I am not talking about running a stop sign, I am talking about violent criminals. That means there are 80,000 illegal aliens with criminal convictions that are on the prowl, thanks to our broken immigration system.

So what great force does our Federal Government provide to enforce the immigration laws of our Nation and account for the 400,000 illegal aliens with standing deportation orders, or the 80,000 of those who are criminal aliens? Just 2,000 folks who work for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, as they say in north Georgia, these folks have just got more than they can say grace over. These 2,000 men and women work hard, they are good people, but, as the numbers suggest, it is not a fair fight, and this is not a realistic goal, if we intend to enforce our immigration laws.

Mr. Speaker, it is time we got serious about fixing our sad immigration law enforcement system. This week, after much thought and work, I introduced the Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal Act. We are going to call it the CLEAR Act of 2003. It is a bill that would finally give assistance and motivation to those 2,000 agents in the field by granting local and State law officers access to data, clarification of the jurisdiction, and appropriate funding and training to help them. Finally, it gives clarification and teeth to the laws already on the books, and order and accountability to a system that has been lacking in much of that for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity here, I believe, to finally insist that this country enforce the laws that are on our books. We are a Nation of laws. I believe that. I believe that is what makes America great. But for us to say that we are going to enforce our laws against 400,000 illegal aliens that are out there with deportation orders, or the 80,000 that are criminals, or the 4,000 that come from countries friendly to al Qaeda, or the 10,000 or so that are needed for questioning by our national security agencies, at a time when we are concerned about terrorists, we simply absolutely must do something about this, and the CLEAR law will do that. I encourage my colleagues to look at our bill and hopefully cosponsor it.

#### IMPACT OF THE BAKU-TIBLISI-CEYHAN PIPELINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.